

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

November 14, 2006

The meeting of the Maryland Commission on Human Relations was called to order on Tuesday, November 14, 2006 at 10:15 a.m., in Baltimore, Maryland.

Present Thomas Owen, Rabbi Elan Adler, Sambhu Banik, Norman Gelman, John Hermina and JoAnn Fisher.

APPROVAL OF The minutes of the October meeting were accepted as written.
THE MINUTES

CHAIRPERSON'S Chairperson Owen informed Commissioners that since the meeting, two
REPORT more letters were sent to folks in the Maryland Senate, Senator Gloria G.
Letters Sent to Lawlah and Senator Verna L. Jones, asking them to support MCHR's request
Senators for additional funding for the over-the-mark budget, as well as support for the
attorneys for the Commercial Non-Discriminatory Act. Chairperson Owen
stated that he has not been overwhelmed with responses to these requests.
This is the third letter Chairperson Owen has sent to members of the
legislature requesting support of MCHR's request.

Senator Jones is the chair of the Black Caucus and Senator Lawlah is one of
the lead sponsors of the bill on the Senate side. Chairperson Owen has not
heard anything from Delegate Talmadge Branch, lead sponsor of the bill on
the House side.

EXECUTIVE Commissioners received copies of the Executive Director's Report (See
DIRECTOR'S attached). The Executive Director informed Commissioners that the General
REPORT Counsel has extended an offer, which was accepted, to a candidate for the
current vacant attorney position. The Executive Director and the General
Counsel, after some discussions, decided that the person hired to fill the
current attorney vacancy is more of an experienced senior level attorney. The
more experienced senior level attorney previously hired will spearhead the

Commercial Non-Discrimination bill. The position approved was an entry level position. The new attorney will be responsible for routine day-to-day work of the Commission.

**Fiscal Year 2008
Budget**

The Executive Director informed Commissioners that MCHR's budget for Fiscal Year 2008, which included the over-the-mark request, is pending before the Department of Budget and Management.

The Assistant Director informed Commissioners that last evening he spoke with the agency's Budget Analyst. The analyst is in the process of completing his work on the recommendations for MCHR's 2008 request.

The Assistant Director stated that the Department of Budget and Management Budget Analyst will recommend that MCHR's regular budget request be accepted without any substantial changes.

The Assistant Director stated that the Analyst is finishing up his work and MCHR should hear something by the end of the week.

**Annual Report
Draft
Letter of
Transmittal**

Commissioners received copies of a draft Letter of Transmittal for the Annual Report from Chairperson Owen (See attached). Chairperson Owen revised the transmittal letter after hearing concerns of fellow Commissioners during the October Commission meeting. He stated that the transmittal letter needs to be sent to the new Governor and his staff prior to the deadline (January 1) for submitting the Annual Report.

Commissioner Gelman stated that the draft Letter of Transmittal does not mention the reduction in federal funds. The Executive Director, who also signs the Transmittal Letter, will make this addition. Commissioner Gelman would like a copy of the final Annual Report by December 1, 2006.

The Information Technology Manager informed Commissioners that the Annual Report will be sent to the printer by the end of November. The printer will prepare a markup and send the markup to MCHR. There will only be one copy for MCHR to review and approve. Once the report has been approved it will be printed. The Information Technology Manager informed Commissioners that the Annual Report will be e-linked to over 800 individuals.

Chairperson Owen stated that the Letter of Transmittal, with a cover letter, should be sent to folks MCHR identifies, to the Secretary of Budget and Management and other key persons on the new Governor's staff.

The Executive Director inquired as to whether all Commissioners received the draft of the Annual Report. Commissioners received a copy of the Annual Report in their folder. The Annual Report can be downloaded from MCHR's

website and can also be printed.

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that the General Counsel section of the report in their folders is not the new draft. The General Counsel gave Commissioners copies of the new draft, which will be added to the report.

DEPUTY
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT
Case Processing
Report

Commissioners received copies of the Deputy Director's Report (See attached). The Executive Director, reporting for the Deputy Director who was absent due to illness, informed Commissioners that the federal contract year ended in September. MCHR met the contract. If agencies submit more cases than contracted for they are not reimbursed for them.

The Executive Director informed Commissioners that MCHR receives funds from the federal government for processing employment and housing discrimination cases. MCHR does not have any other revenue sources, other than state general funds for processing public accommodation discrimination cases. Therefore, MCHR has to prioritize its resources. Housing and employment cases are MCHR's priority because it receives funds and the funds are based on both number and time in processing. As staff has decreased over the years so has the number of investigators working on public accommodation cases.

The Executive Director also stated that part of the problem with public accommodation accessibility cases is that an engineer is required to conduct a study of the premises to help the Respondent come into compliance with the law. If a Respondent can or will not pay for the engineer, MCHR has to. Discussion was held regarding the difficulty and the expense entailed in engaging a qualified engineer.

ASSISTANT
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT

Commissioners received copies of the agency's Monthly Budget Status Report (See attached). The Assistant Director informed Commissioners that MCHR's current budget year is proceeding on target.

Information
Technology Unit

The Information Technology Manager informed Commissioners that MCHR is waiting for a shipment of computers.

GENERAL
COUNSEL'S
REPORT

Commissioners received copies of the General Counsel's Report (See attached). Last month Commissioners requested the names and addresses of the Sponsors of Senate Bill 897. The General Counsel provided the list to Commissioners today.

Equal Pay
Commission Report

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that she has a copy of the Equal Pay Commission's Report that was issued on September 30, 2006. A recommendation was made that an on-going Commission be created to continue with the work begun by the Commission.

Women's Law Center	The General Counsel informed Commissioners that the Women's Law Center has developed an Employment Law Hotline (See attached). People can call this hotline with employment questions and receive assistance with their employment issue. The kickoff for the hotline is December 5, 2006.
Commercial Non-Discrimination Policy	<p>The General Counsel informed Commissioners that amendments have been drafted to the policy.</p> <p>Chairperson Owen inquired as to the General Counsel preparing a financial summary of the cost of dealing with the Commercial Non-Discrimination complaints. The General Counsel stated that MCHR has the assessment that the Attorney General had, that set out what the staffing is.</p>
Charles County Forum on Hate Crimes	The General Counsel and the Training Specialist attended a community forum in Charles County that dealt with hate crimes.
OLD BUSINESS Hispanic Study	<p>Chairperson Owen informed Commissioners that the committee has heard from Dr. Jo Anne Schneider, who would like to meet with the other committee members to talk about funding sources.</p> <p>Commission meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.</p>

Barbara Wilson